

Slate Creek AMP Meeting Notes December 15, 2011

Notes Taken by Patricia Harris (BLM)

Notes Compiled and Typed by Spencer Allred (BLM)

In Attendance:

Pat Netherly – Former BLM Range Specialist for Slate Creek, now contracted with Lincoln Conservation District.

Bill Taliaferro – Big Sandy and Green River Land & Livestock (Slate Creek Permittee)

Steve Walker – Walker Ranch (Slate Creek Permittee)

Levi Walker – Walker Ranch (Slate Creek Permittee)

Chris Schulthess – Private Landowner (Slate Creek area)

Wallace Schulthess – Private Landowner (Slate Creek area)

Seth Schulthess – Private Landowner (Slate Creek area)

Laura Pearson – Green River Livestock (Slate Creek Permittee)

Justin Williams – Wyoming Department of Agriculture

Chris Wichmann – Wyoming Department of Agriculture

Lucy Pauley – Wyoming Department of Agriculture

Dave Julian – Julian Land & Livestock (Slate Creek Permittee)

Truman Julian – Julian Land & Livestock (Slate Creek Permittee)

Jonathan Teichert – Lincoln County Planning

Arny Larson – Larson Ranch (Slate Creek Permittee)

Deb Wolfley – Lincoln County Commissioner

Paul Jenkins – Lincoln County Commissioner

Kent Connelly – Lincoln County Commissioner

Bob Peternel – Lincoln Conservation District

Blaine Thoman – Slate Creek Permittee

Harry Hamilton – With Blaine Thoman (Slate Creek Permittee)

Joshua Freeman – BLM Wildlife Biologist

Spencer Allred – BLM Rangeland Management Specialist

Trisha Harris – BLM Front Desk Clerk

Marion Mahaffey – BLM Natural Resource Specialist

Minutes:

Spencer Allred Opened the Meeting

Welcome and Introductions

Purpose of the Meeting: To brainstorm and talk about our concerns and ideas

The Group Established Ground Rules for the meeting:

Ground Rules:

1. Get Going
2. Accomplish Something
3. Avoid Redundancy

Spencer Allred gave a brief history of grazing management on the allotment.

- A conversion from primarily sheep use, to a lot of cattle use occurred sometime before 1973.
- Around 1978 BLM started noticing a downward trend in streams, and an upward trend in uplands. This was thought to be due to the conversions from sheep to cattle that had taken place.
- The 1993 AMP proposed splitting the allotment into 6 separate allotments. After receiving a large number of comments from the public opposing the construction of more fences in the area, the proposal was dropped.

- The 2005 AMP did not propose very much new fencing, but did establish use areas, and a rotation system using mineral supplements and herding. This AMP was protested by one of the permittees, and the BLM never pursued it further.

Bill Taliaferro added that he noticed the main change occur when season of use changed from sheep in the spring and fall, to season long, along with season long cattle use.

The issues brought up in the 1970's are the same issues we are dealing with today.

Spencer Allred then turned some time over to Lucy Pauley from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture.

Lucy talked about Technical Review Teams (TRT). She handed out a brochure with information on technical review teams, and then explained about what they do. They are a team made up of different experts (often professors from the University of Wyoming, or from other government agencies) in various applicable fields (Range, Wildlife, Hydrology, etc...). The team is specially picked so that it is made up of impartial individuals who do not have a personal interest in the issue at hand. They represent a third party, impartial review team. They look at the area of concern, and make some management recommendations. The use of the team is paid for by the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, and must be initiated by one of the permittees.

Lucy then answered some questions the attendants had about the Technical Review Teams.

Truman Julian expressed that he has used a TRT before on the Twin Creek allotment to resolve some conflicts between sheep and cattle operators. He thought they were very good, and that they have great input which helps both the permittees and the agency.

Spencer told the attendants that the BLM would take a serious look at the recommendations of the TRT, and would likely incorporate many of their recommendations, but cannot guarantee they will be able to incorporate any or all of the recommendations into the AMP.

The group then did an exercise where they wrote down each of their concerns with the Slate Creek area, or the AMP process on an index card and then stuck the cards to a sticky wall. The attendants then helped group their concerns into similar categories. The following categories were identified:

- Conflicts between wildlife and livestock
- Livestock distribution / lack of water developments
- Potential future restrictions in response to sage grouse policy
- Concerns about continuation of livestock grazing, AUMs, and livestock kind
- Fencing or the lack thereof
- Concerned about a lack of data and/or science being used to make decisions
- Road access / maintenance to allow for livestock management
- Preservation of private property rights
- Social and economic impacts (i.e. the importance of livestock grazing to Lincoln County)
- Lack of funding for projects
- Stream conditions
- Concerned about making management decisions based on threats of outside groups

After determining the concerns associated with Slate Creek, the group made some general goals for the Slate Creek AMP:

Goals

- Water Developments #1 (Big Issue)
- Use a Technical Review Team
- No Loss of Grazing (in all aspects)
- More Monitoring of Wildlife use
- Maintain Multiple Use
- Good Monitoring of both Livestock and Wildlife (in both Riparian and Upland Areas)
- Establish better working relationships with Wyoming Game & Fish Department

Bill Taliaferro brought up how wildlife vs cattle use is watched.

Truman Julian wants BLM to set up plan for more data on seasons use / game & fish involvement on monitoring

Communication is a big key

The group then used index cards on another sticky wall to give their ideas for improvements on Slate Creek.

Ideas for Improvement

- Range Improvements (water developments, spike, fences, roads)
- No ACEC (Area of Critical Environmental Concern) in the Slate Creek area
Reclassification of Visual Resource Management in the area Remand Winter Wildlife Closures (outside the scope of this project)
- Look for Alternate Funding Sources for Projects (involve oil & gas companies)
- The Project Should Have Appropriate Time Tables and Priorities
- Remain Open (in all aspects)
- Incorporate better Monitoring of Livestock and Wildlife use
- Use a Technical Review Team to get ideas for improvement

Very concerned about access to do repair

Funding is a big concern

After all ideas had been categorized, Spencer Allred mentioned that some of them may be beyond the scope of an allotment management plan, particularly the designation of ACEC's and reclassification of Visual Resource Management.

NRCS Monies may be to be used for water developments.

The group agreed that they want a TRT for this allotment. Truman Julian agreed to take the lead on this.

Spencer Allred stated that the AMP process is in the very early stages, and there is no strict deadline that we are trying to meet. We want to take our time to do it right.

Future Meetings:

Water developments – get the ball rolling

The group prefers short meetings periodically to discuss specific issues.

2 meetings for sure this winter to discuss 1: water developments and 2: monitoring
These things can get started this year, so focus on them first.

Steve Walker recommended that future meetings take place in the afternoon starting at 1pm, to give the ranchers time to finish their morning chores.

The participants were thanked for their comments and thoughts, and the meeting adjourned.

Actual Comments:

In the sections above, comments were grouped into categories and those categories were summarized. Below is given the actual comments that were presented during the brain storming exercises of the meeting.

Concerns:

- Funding – For Projects
- Road Maintenance
- Grazing – Livestock Important to Lincoln County
- Private Property Rights
- Good Science TRT
- Use good science to make decisions
- What changes have been documented / identified and what role has grazing played in those changes
- Utilization is a tool – not the desired condition. It's a tool to achieve DFC
- May need more fencing for cattle control. Hot season use by livestock (mainly cattle) on riparian vegetation
- Livestock continue grazing
- Current AUM's: Cattle, Sheep, Wildlife
- Cattle use should only be cow with calves (no yearlings)
- Closing of Slate Creek allotment Jan 1 – April 30
- Continual forage for big game species in Allotment
- Game & Fish moving elk into the Slate Creek. Riparian areas conflicts with deer wintering
- Game & Fish influence on AMP
- Sage Grouse Initiative (future listing) 2 yr.
- Sage Grouse Core Area – Restrictions on Slate Creek
- Sage Grouse Core Area and grazing guidance issues
- Water on North East of Slate Creek ATO. Spring use
- Need H2O development to get better livestock distribution
- Water Development
- Lack of Water sources for livestock
- Lack of water in some areas
- Water Development to Disperse Livestock
- Livestock Distribution
- Higher country being grazed later depend on year
- Stream Condition
- WWP – Involvement. Do not make management decisions based on their threats.

Ideas

- VRM Reclassification of Slate Creek and Trail Segments
- Slate Creek ACEC should be opposed
- Appropriate Time Table / Priorities
- Remain Open
- Look at possible range improvement projects like spike treatment
- Causal factors need to be identified i.e. overpopulated elk and antelope
- Need to identify grazing problem livestock, wildlife etc. and remedies
- Need more range monitoring
- Need to use TRT Team to get unbiased data of what's going on in the allotment
- 3 – party cooperative monitoring
- Allotment rotation of Grazing can't be done with riders. Need some type of fencing. Electric?
- Need some type of fencing to move livestock and get rest in already grazed areas.
- Realistic wildlife #'s. Grazing
- Winter Closure order should be remanded
- Don't let big game numbers be deciding factor over sheep – cattle in grazing
- Water Development New & Existing Sites
- Work w/ oil & gas to develop water
- Fix existing wells, reservoir
- Solar water wells
- Water wells
- Expedited access for water & veg improvement projects, CX's
- BLM needs to give fast permission to repair – what needs to happen – forget red tape
- BLM has to allow access by machines and machinery to repair water developments
- H2O developments – Map existing developments may just need to rebuild
- H2O developments – Commission for funds for water improvements
- Survey available facilities & condition of these